

## Safe Dates

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Education | Personnel Training | Cost | Intended Age Group | Intended Population  
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*Program developers or their agents provided the Model Program information below.*

### BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Safe Dates is a program designed to stop or prevent the initiation of emotional, physical, and sexual abuse on dates or between individuals involved in a dating relationship. Intended for male and female middle and high school students aged 12 to 18, the Safe Dates program can stand alone or easily fit within a health education or family or general life skills curriculum. Because dating violence is often tied to substance abuse, Safe Dates also can be used with drug and alcohol prevention and general violence prevention programs.

The Safe Dates program consists of five components: a nine-session curriculum, a play script, a poster contest, parent materials, and a teacher-training outline.

Program activities are designed to:

- Change adolescent dating violence norms
- Change adolescent gender role norms
- Improve conflict resolution skills for dating relationships
- Promote victim and perpetrator beliefs in the need for help and awareness of community resources for dating violence
- Promote help-seeking by victims and perpetrators
- Improve peer help-giving skills

All program materials, including reproducible student handouts, are included in the Safe Dates binder. Suggestions for a six- or four-session program are included, but program fidelity is best maintained by completing all nine sessions. Safe Dates parent materials are also available in Spanish at: [www.hazelden.org/safedates](http://www.hazelden.org/safedates).

### PROGRAM BACKGROUND

Initial funding for the development of the Safe Dates program came through a University of North Carolina intramural grant. Those funds were used to develop and pilot-test the first five sessions of the curriculum.



The Safe Dates Project was funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, from 1993 to 1999. The purpose of the Project was to complete the development of the Safe Dates program and to evaluate its efficacy in preventing and reducing dating violence victimization and perpetration in both the short-term (1-month post-intervention) and long-term (4 years post-intervention).

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## **RECOGNITION**

### **MODEL PROGRAM**

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

### **EXEMPLARY PROGRAM**

Safe and Drug Free Schools Program, U.S. Department of Education

### **PROMISING PROGRAM**

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice

### **SUCCESSFUL CURRICULUM**

American Academy of Pediatrics

### **EFFECTIVE PROGRAM**

American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology

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## **IOM CLASSIFICATION**

### **UNIVERSAL, SELECTIVE, INDICATED**

Safe Dates can be used as a universal, selective, and indicated intervention.

Safe Dates is a dating abuse prevention tool for male and female middle and high school students. It fits within a health education, family life skills, or general life skills curriculum. Because dating violence is often tied to substance abuse, Safe Dates could be used with drug and alcohol prevention and general violence prevention programs.

Safe Dates could be part of a school's support group or counseling program or after school, community enrichment (e.g., YMCA, Girl Scouts), or faith-based youth programs. Safe Dates could be used as an intervention tool at domestic crisis centers, at juvenile diversion programs, and with victim support groups.

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## **INTERVENTION TYPE**

### **SCHOOL-BASED**

Although it can be delivered in other settings, the Safe Dates curriculum is primarily designed for implementation in a school or classroom.

## **CONTENT FOCUS**

### **SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE, VIOLENCE, DOES NOT SPECIFICALLY ADDRESS ANY SUBSTANCES**

#### **SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE**

The Safe Dates curriculum has sessions that focus on social and emotional issues—such as changing norms, what constitutes a healthy dating relationship, defining abusive behaviors, learning how to handle emotions such as anger and jealousy, and learning positive communication skills.

#### **VIOLENCE**

Safe Dates primarily addresses the issue of dating violence and the psychological trauma associated with violence.

#### **DOES NOT SPECIFICALLY ADDRESS ANY SUBSTANCES**

Because dating violence is so often tied to drug and alcohol use, Safe Dates could also be used as a component of a drug and alcohol education effort.

#### **Parents as adjunct strategy:**

The Safe Dates program sees the parents' role as an important prevention tool when addressing dating abuse. The Safe Dates program includes a parent newsletter that gives parents ideas for addressing dating violence with their children. The curriculum also encourages schools to consider offering a parent education program around this topic or performing the dating abuse play for parents and other community members. Research is currently being done on a more in-depth parent component for the program that may be added in the future.

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## **INTERVENTIONS BY DOMAIN**

### **INDIVIDUAL**

Classroom curricula designed to motivate pro-health decisions and skill use; life skills training/values clarification and antiviolence models

### **FAMILY**

Parent education

### **PEER**

Peer resistance education

### **SCHOOL**

Classroom-based skill development

### **COMMUNITY**

Education to alter the perceptions of societal norms and expectations

## **KEY PROGRAM APPROACHES/COMPONENTS**

**IN-/AFTER-SCHOOL CURRICULA; PEER LEADERSHIP, COUNSELING, OR SUPPORT;  
PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION AND REFERRAL; SCHOOL/COMMUNITY COLLABORATION;  
SKILLS DEVELOPMENT**

### **IN-/AFTER-SCHOOL CURRICULA**

Safe Dates is a dating violence prevention curriculum that can be used as a standalone curriculum or added to a comprehensive violence-prevention or drug and alcohol education program. The curriculum can be used in a school-based setting, as a community program, or as an after-school program.

### **PEER LEADERSHIP, COUNSELING, OR SUPPORT**

The curriculum includes a 45-minute dating abuse prevention play written by high school drama students. It teaches students how to help their friends, exposes them to local statistics on dating abuse, and has them participate in group discussions led by the actors to discuss issues presented in the play. In addition, some schools have trained peer leaders who teach or assist in teaching the Safe Dates program.

### **PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION AND REFERRAL**

One of the critical skills taught in the Safe Dates program is the ability to identify abusive behavior and then seek help when abusive behavior occurs.

### **SCHOOL/COMMUNITY COLLABORATION**

Safe Dates encourages school and community collaboration with local domestic violence crisis centers, such as the National Domestic Violence Hotline. Teachers and implementers are instructed to identify and locate community resources in order to provide emergency and non-emergency referrals for those who need it.

### **SKILL DEVELOPMENT**

One of the critical skills taught in the Safe Dates program is the skill of being able to identify abusive behavior and to seek help when abusive behavior occurs. Safe Dates teaches students a number of skills that will help them experience positive, healthy dating relationships, including anger management, communication skills, problem-solving skills, and general positive social skills.

### **Parents as adjunct strategy:**

The Safe Dates program sees the parents' role as an important prevention tool when addressing dating abuse. The Safe Dates program includes a parent newsletter and brochure that gives parents ideas of how they can address dating violence with their children. The curriculum also encourages schools to consider offering a parent education program around this topic or performing the dating abuse play for parents and other community members. Research is currently being done on a more in-depth parent component for the program that may be added in the future.

### **HOW IT WORKS**

The Safe Dates intervention has five components: a nine-session curriculum, a play script\*, a poster contest, parent materials, and a teacher-training outline. The curriculum is delivered in nine 50-minute sessions and includes interactive exercises such as games, small- and large-

group discussions, role-playing, and writing exercises. In schools, teachers and counselors can deliver Safe Dates, and some schools have trained student peer leaders to teach or assist with program delivery. The nine session topics include:

**Session 1: Defining Caring Relationships**

**Session 2: Defining Dating Abuse**

**Session 3: Why Do People Abuse?**

**Session 4: How To Help Friends**

**Session 5: Helping Friends**

**Session 6: Overcoming Gender Stereotypes**

**Session 7: Equal Power Through Communication**

**Session 8: How We Feel, How We Deal**

**Session 9: Preventing Sexual Assault**

The 45-minute play about dating abuse and violence entitled, “There’s No Excuse for Dating Abuse” uses student actors who can lead post-play small-group discussions using local statistics on teen dating abuse and other issues presented in the play.

#### **IMPLEMENTATION ESSENTIALS**

The Safe Dates curriculum is best delivered in nine daily or weekly sessions, with a poster contest at the end of Session 9. All program materials, including reproducible student handouts, are included in the Safe Dates program implementation binder. Suggestions for a six- or four-session curriculum are provided, but program fidelity is best maintained by completing the nine-session curriculum, the play, and the poster contest. Training is not required, but highly recommended.

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## **OUTCOMES**

### **REDUCTIONS IN NEGATIVE ATTITUDES/BEHAVIORS, IMPROVEMENTS IN POSITIVE ATTITUDES/BEHAVIORS**

#### **REDUCTIONS IN NEGATIVE ATTITUDES/BEHAVIORS**

At the 1-month, 1-year, 2-year, and 3-year followups, adolescents who were exposed to Safe Dates in the eighth or ninth grade, as compared to those who were not, reported significantly less psychological, moderate physical, severe physical, and sexual dating violence perpetration and less moderate physical dating violence victimization. Additionally, there was a marginal program effect on sexual dating violence victimization at all four follow-up periods. Significant program effects on behaviors were maintained at the 4-year followup.

#### **IMPROVEMENTS IN POSITIVE ATTITUDES/BEHAVIORS**

Safe Dates also positively changed cognitive mediating variables that were based on program content, such as dating violence norms, gender stereotyping, conflict management skills, and awareness of community services for dating violence.

## EVALUATION DESIGN

Safe Dates was evaluated using a pretest, posttest control group experimental design. The 14 schools in one county in North Carolina with eighth and ninth grades were stratified by grade and matched on school size. One school from each matched pair was randomly assigned to treatment condition and the other to a control condition.

Baseline data were collected in schools from 81 percent of the eighth and ninth graders in the county ( $n = 1,886$ ). The Safe Dates program was delivered in seven treatment schools. Followup data have been collected using self-administered questionnaires completed in schools 1 month, 1 year, 2 years, 3 years, and 4 years after the program activities were completed. Extensive process data also were collected on program fidelity.

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## DELIVERY SPECIFICATIONS

### 5–24 WEEKS

**Amount of time required to deliver the program and obtain documented outcomes:**

The Safe Dates curriculum has nine (50-minute) sessions, but can be delivered in six- or four-session programs. However, program fidelity was developed using all nine sessions.

In addition, there is a 45-minute dating abuse prevention play that can be performed as part of the curriculum program or as a separate standalone event; there is also a poster contest.

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## INTENDED SETTING

### RURAL

Safe Dates was designed for use in a wide variety of settings. Although the evaluation reviewed by NREPP was conducted in a predominantly rural setting, the curriculum is not rural in nature, and could easily be integrated into a suburban or urban setting. Names of students used in the program scenarios and play are ethnically diverse, and the scenarios are not tied to one particular location.

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## FIDELITY

**Components that must be included in order to achieve the same outcomes cited by the developer:**

To maintain fidelity, all nine sessions of the curriculum, the play, and the poster contest should be completed. The curriculum provides clear instructions for implementing these sessions. Following these instructions will maintain the program's fidelity. The performance of the dating abuse play and participation in the poster contest are key components of the Safe Dates program.

**Optional components or strategies, and how they were determined to be optional:**

The parent newsletter and teacher training outline are components that we highly recommend using, but they were not part of the evaluation study.

## **BARRIERS AND PROBLEMS**

Key barriers and problems associated with the use of this Model Program and potential solutions:

**Barrier:** One of the primary barriers may be the difficulty of securing enough time to implement all nine sessions of the curriculum.

**Solution:** Suggested six-session and four-session alternatives are provided, but it is important to understand that conducting a shorter program does not guarantee fidelity of the program or similar program outcomes.

**Barrier:** Teachers may have discomfort in discussing this sensitive subject.

**Solution:** It will be important to train teachers on the topic and to help them troubleshoot issues that may come up (for example, if a student reports an abusive dating relationship, what should a teacher do?). It also may be helpful to involve the local domestic violence crisis center, since staff people at the center will have expertise in this area.

**Barrier:** Parent approval for the program.

**Solution:** Although parent disapproval of the Safe Dates program has not been an issue, it may be something that needs to be addressed. The curriculum provides guidelines for helping parents understand the program. It is important that parents understand that the program does not encourage dating, and it does not contain volitional sexual content. It may help to have concerned parents review the curriculum so they understand the content that is covered.

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## **PERSONNEL**

### **FULL-TIME, PART-TIME, PAID, VOLUNTEER**

**Types of positions needed to implement this Model Program:**

Safe Dates is a relatively simple program and can be easily implemented by individual teachers or facilitators without additional participation. Likewise, if a school or organization would like to use Safe Dates to address the issue of dating violence system-wide, they may want to create a committee that discusses issues of implementation at this larger level.

**Typical personnel problems encountered by users when implementing this Model Program, and potential solutions:**

Safe Dates is a relatively simple program to implement with clear, step-by-step instructions. A teacher, however, may want to involve someone from his or her community's domestic violence crisis center, since staff members from the center may have a better depth of knowledge about the topic and more understanding of available local resources. This is not necessary, but may be a positive addition to the program.

## **EDUCATION**

### **UNDERGRADUATE, GRADUATE**

**Education/qualifications of the personnel needed to implement this Model Program successfully:**

A person implementing the Safe Dates program should have a general understanding of adolescent development and issues related to adolescent dating. In addition, this person should feel comfortable leading large group discussions, facilitating role-plays, and organizing group debates. When needed, this person should look to outside resources to help in the implementation of this program. This person should also be comfortable adapting the program to the specific student populations and needs. Additional training specifically on the use of the Safe Dates curriculum is available, but not mandatory.

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## **PERSONNEL TRAINING**

### **TYPE**

Seminars/Workshops, Classroom, Workbook

### **LOCATION**

Onsite (of user), Offsite (at developer's or trainer's location)

### **LENGTH**

Basic, Refresher required

### **TYPE:**

The program can be purchased and implemented without training. However, it may be desired, particularly if implemented district- or school-wide, that the program coordinator and key teachers be trained in the use of the curriculum and the parent component. Participants are then equipped to train additional direct providers of the curriculum. The delivery of the training is tailored to the needs of the particular site.

### **LOCATION:**

Contact Hazelden Publishing and Educational Services at 1-800-328-9000 ext. 4030 for information on a training or for other technical support. Training costs will vary depending upon the volume of product purchased and whether training is delivered on- or off-site.

### **LENGTH:**

Safe Dates basic and refresher training can be completed in 1 day each.



## **COST (ESTIMATED IN U.S. DOLLARS)**

\$101–\$1,000

Cost considerations for implementing this program as recommended by the developer:

### **BUDGET COSTS**

Safe Dates has been priced relatively inexpensively at \$149. No additional costs are required since all the program materials are included and reproducible. Additional funds will be needed to pay for duplication.

### **TRAINING COSTS**

Contact Hazelden Publishing and Educational Services at (800) 328–9000 ext. 4030 for information on training or for other technical support. Training is not required, but encouraged. Training costs will vary, depending upon the volume of product purchased.

### **MATERIALS COSTS**

All materials are included in the Safe Dates binder. In addition, a specialty product is available that can serve as an incentive for students who participate in Safe Dates. It is a key light with the words “Be Safe” on it, which is sold in packs of 30 for \$30.

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## **INTENDED AGE GROUP**

### **EARLY ADOLESCENT (12–14), TEENAGER (15–17)**

Safe Dates was developed for both boys and girls in middle school and high school. Evaluations of the effects of Safe Dates were conducted with eighth and ninth graders.

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## **INTENDED POPULATION**

### **AFRICAN AMERICAN, WHITE**

Safe Dates was evaluated with both African American and White students. It is intended for use with a wide variety of students, however, and the curriculum also provides suggestions on how to adapt the content to address specific cultural issues around dating and dating violence.

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## **GENDER**

### **BOTH GENDERS**

Safe Dates is designed for use with both boys and girls.

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## **REPLICATIONS**

NO INFORMATION PROVIDED

## **ADAPTATIONS**

NO INFORMATION PROVIDED

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## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

### **ABOUT THE DEVELOPER**

The principal authors are Vangie Foshee, Ph.D., and Stacey Langwick, Ph.D. Dr. Foshee is an associate professor in the Department of Health Behavior and Health Education at the University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill. Dr. Foshee conducts research on the development of adolescent problem behaviors (substance abuse, dating violence, and student aggression) and the effectiveness of programs for preventing those behaviors. Dr. Langwick is an assistant professor in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Florida.

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